

THE

# HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

March 2007

## MARCH HAPPENINGS

Our March luncheon will be held on Thursday, March 15, 2007, at noon at the Kate Lo-brano House, 108 Cue Street. The speaker will be Meg Hil-likier. Join us for a great lunch and wonderful company. Please call for reservations by noon on March 14, 2007, at 467-4090 because seating will be limited. The price of the lunch is \$7.00 payable at the door. A very special thank you goes to Prima Luke, our luncheon chef, for the delicious roast pork, sweet potatoes, and asparagus tips last month.



Tercentenary Park as it looked prior to August 29, 2005

## TERCENTENARY PARK REDICATION

Please make plans to attend the rededication of Tercentenary Park at 2:00 P. M. on Tuesday, March 13, 2007. The volunteers from Bucks and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania, have done an outstanding job in refurbishing the park.

THE HANCOCK COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P. O. BOX 3356  
BAY ST. LOUIS, MS. 39521

## HOPE IN OUR TIME OF TRIAL AND SORROW

By Charles Gray

The three hundredth anniversary of the founding of Bay Saint Louis was celebrated in grand style on August 25, 1999, when Tercentenary Park was opened on Beach Boulevard next to the Hancock Bank. The life-size statue of John Baptiste LeMoynes, sieur de Bienville atop a dozen granite plaques engraved with the names of prominent citizens from the past, dominated the garden.

Hundreds of bricks, likewise engraved with sentiments or names, decorated the walkway to the statue.

The gateway was topped with a great arch with the city crest in bronze *bas relief* and the flanking columns each had a replica of *Le Marin* and *La Badine*, the ships that brought the explorer/settlers to our shores. The spears of the iron fence were fleur-de-lis detailed from the flag of France of 1699 and indeed that flag, along with the Stars and Stripes, flew high above the whole park.

Hurricane Katrina reduced the entire park to rubble except for

(Continued on p. 3)



THE

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

**PRESIDENT'S  
MESSAGE**

Last month my President's message must have seemed pretty grim. For those of you who sent a donation to our rebuilding fund, I thank you. I can assure you that your donation will be put to good use.

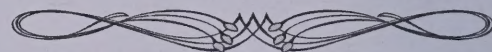
Timing in life is everything. No sooner had the newsletter been printed than two very big checks came in. One was for \$11,000.00 from Bucks County, PA, and the other was from MEMA for \$24,000.00. The latter has many strings attached, and it will take us a little time to sort through the paperwork. We have also been told that a rather large donation will come our way in March. Now, at last, we can get our repairs started. So look for big things from us!

Our meetings have been well attended, our speakers are good, and Prima Luke (formerly of Dock of the Bay) is doing a spectacular job on the lunches. There is still room for you, and we would like to see you at the

meetings. Please remember to make your reservations early. It is very hard to plan for a "last minute crowd." We must have the proper number of tables and place settings set up and enough food cooked to accommodate everyone. We would hate to turn anyone away, so please try to cooperate with the luncheon team.

Remember we work mainly with a volunteer staff. If we all pitch in and do a little, no one has to do a lot.

*Melinda*



Tercentenary Park after Hurricane Katrina



(Continued from p. 1)

the statue. Much of the granite was broken and over 160 name bricks simply disappeared in the aftermath of the storm leaving a scene of despair for us who had worked so hard to create the park.

But, then there came a sunrise, a bright new morning about a month ago. An incredible group of people from Pennsylvania, primarily Bucks and Montgomery Counties came to help. Vacationing students from Delaware College built a temporary fence, cleaned the debris from the park, turned and fertilized the soil, installed an underground watering system, and planted dozens of plants.

On March 13, 2007, representatives of this group will return. They will dedicate the million dollar day care facility they have built for Hancock County on Highway 603, a new humane society shelter they are building at Port Bienville, and, of course, Tercentenary Park. Among the many people responsi-

ble for these accomplishments are Nancy Bergere, Normandy Gack, and Eric Fleischer of Doylestown, Pennsylvania. We will always remember these wonderful friends who sought us out to bring hope in our time of trial and sorrow.

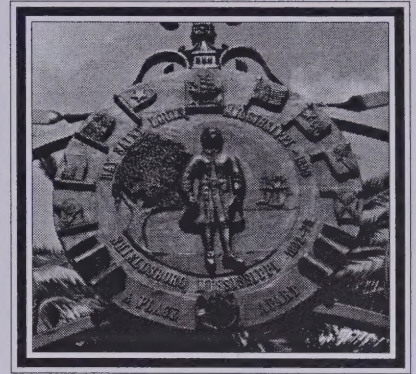
## WHY IS THE STATUE OF JEAN BAPTISTE LE MOYNE, SIEUR DE BIENVILLE?

Original by Charles Gray  
(Reprinted from *The Historian of August 1999*)

Currently edited by  
Eddie Coleman

On August 25, 1297, Louis IX of France was canonized for leading both the First and Second Crusades into the Holy Land, thus establishing the Feast Day of Saint Louis.

Four hundred and two years later, on August 25, 1699, a small party of French explorers led



City Crest on the park fence

by Jean Baptiste LeMoyne, Sieur de Bienville entered and explored a "beautiful bay" that he named the Bay of Saint Louis.

And now, three hundred years after that historic happening, we will celebrate the event by dedicating a life-size bronze statue of M. Bienville and by opening Tercentenary Park. The statue has been sculptured by Mary Ott Davidson, who was graduated from Biloxi Catholic schools and Dominican College in New Orleans. She became a nun, and during her training as a nun, she was introduced to photography, paint, and sculpture. She taught in the inner city while working on a graduate degree in art from Tulane University. She then accepted a position teaching in Zurich, Switzerland.

After returning to the United States, she received a second graduate degree from Vermont College of Norwich University before becoming the head of the art department at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Jeff Davis campus.

She sculptured Bienville's older brother, Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur de Iberville for the city of Biloxi. It was he who ordered the construction of Fort Maurepas at old Biloxi before he returned to France



Mary Ott Davidson at work on the statue of Bienville, January 1999





Tercentenary Park after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina,

in May 1699. The statue stands near the Biloxi Lighthouse.

We felt it was appropriate to honor the younger Le Moyne brother, Bienville, who remained on the Gulf Coast for the better part of forty-six years. Bienville, after all, founded the cities of Bay Saint Louis, Mobile, "New" Biloxi, and New Orleans.

After work was started on the Bienville statue, Mary agreed to sculpture a crest for the city of Bay Saint Louis as well as bas relief replicas of *Le Marin* and *La Badine*, Iberville's and Bienville's ships respectively. These three pieces will adorn the columns at the entrance to Tercentenary Park.

## TERCENTENARY PARK

Original by Charles Gray  
(Reprinted from *The Historian of*  
*August 1999*)

Currently edited by  
Eddie Coleman

Early in 1998, Leo Seal inquired about our plans for the cele-

bration of our 300th anniversary. He mentioned the bronze statue of Iberville that was being made for

Biloxi's beach and offered use of the park next to Hancock Bank should we decide to have a similar one of Iberville's brother Bienville made for Bay Saint Louis. He also offered to pay half the cost of having the statue designed and cast.

When approached on the subject, Mayor Favre and the Bay Saint Louis City Council agreed to assume financial responsibility for the other half. The city and Hancock Bank also agreed to provide [jointly the] necessary labor and materials for the pedestal.

The Historical Society sold granite plaques and bricks for the pedestal surface and for walkways by having them engraved with sponsors' names. It also commissioned the making of the replicas of *Le Marin* and *La Badine* for the two

(Continued on p. 7)



Tercentenary Park after the work done by volunteers from Bucks and Montgomery Counties, PA



## THE VOYAGE OF LE MARIN EPILOGUE

*(The following article was first published in the August 1999 Historian as part of the dedication of Tercentenary Park. It was written by then Society Historian Edith Back.)*

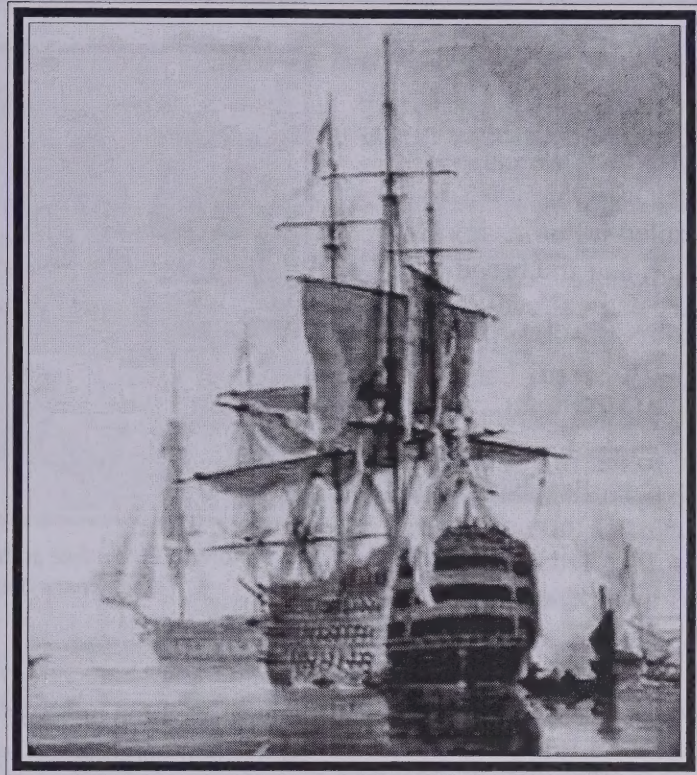
On March 31, 1699, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville returned to *Le Marin*, anchored at Ship Island since he and his party had embarked on a month's exploration of the Mississippi River.

The night before, d'Iberville ordered a signal fire to be lit onshore to alert those on the ships of his return. Most scholars agree that the bonfires were set on the bluff of what would later be named Bay St. Louis. After returning to their frigates, the explorers continued the quest for a site for a French settlement.

On April 2, d'Iberville and d'Sauvolle, in small vessels called *fellucas*, made soundings along the coast. They visited a bay about nine leagues from Ship Island (the Bay of St. Louis). They liked the appearance of the bay with a bluff thirty-one feet above sea level, but the waters were too shallow for the frigates to approach shore.

Soundings continued along the entire Coast from the Pearl to the Pascagoula rivers and the Bay of Biloxi in search of water deep enough for the larger vessels.

Finally on April 7, they found a seven-foot channel on Biloxi Bay and chose the bluff on the



Sailing ships much like the ones used by  
d'Iberville and Bienville

eastern shore for their fort, even though the frigates would have to remain at Ship Island and transfer cargoes to smaller vessels to unload at the site.

Construction began [on] April 8, and the fort was completed [on] May 1. Two days later, d'Iberville, having accomplished his mission, left for France, leaving d'Sauvolle as commander at Fort Biloxi and other officers, including his brother, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, in charge.

On August 25 Bienville left Biloxi to explore the lake route to the Mississippi River. His ship's carpenter, Andre Joseph Penicault, who chronicled the voyage, wrote of the arrival at Bay St. Louis:

"We shortly afterward found a beautiful bay, about one league in width, by four in circumference, which M. Bienville named The Bay of St. Louis, because it was the day of St. Louis that we arrived there."

Aided by Indian guides, Bienville followed the shore through lakes and passes, including Heron Pass (now called Grande Isle Pass), and then leaving the sea, the explorers camped on an island they called *Isle au Pois* (Pea Island) because a sack of peas had been left there. They departed before daylight "on account of the small flies or Cousins, which the Indians call *Maringouins* [mosquitoes]...which puncture the skin quite savagely, even to the



drawing of blood" according to Penicault.

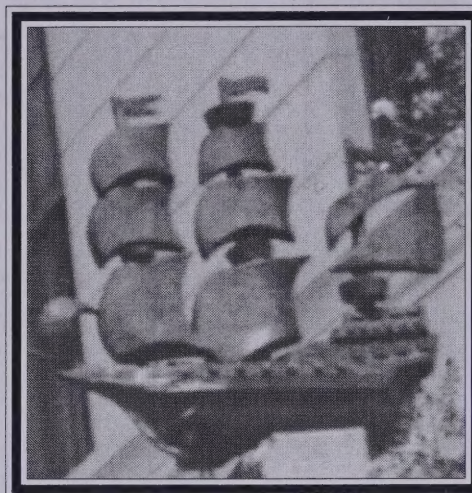
"We shortly after entered a pass or strait which we called the Rigolets [drains], which led to a lake....We called it Pointe aux Coquilles [shells], and the broad lake it contacted had already been named by M. d'Iberville, 'Pontchartrain.'"

After further explorations, as far as the Tangipahoa River, the group returned to Pea Island and next day passed through some small passes that led to the sea three leagues away near St. Louis Bay.

"We camped at the entrance to the Bay, near a fountain of water that flows from the hills, which M. de Bienville named Belle Fontaine." A map by d'Anville, titled *Carte de la Louisiane* shows a fountain [spring or small creek] near the site of today's Bay St. Louis and is believed to be where Bookter Street is today. "We hunted several days on the shores of this bay. We filled our boats with the venison and buffalo that we killed, and next day brought them to our fort," Pericault reported.

In December one sergeant and fifteen men were placed at the settlement in a small fort near where the Toulme mansion once stood on the beach between Carroll Avenue and de Montluzin Street.

"There is no record of the reason for establishing this fort," said historian Robert G. Scharff, "but the copious supply of game at the Bay of St. Louis and the near starvation conditions that pre-



Sculpture of *La Badine* at the entrance to Tercentenary Park

ailed at Biloxi suggest that it may have been established as a hunting and trading post, [sic] to help provision the settlement at Biloxi."

By the early 1700's the French were established in a small fort on the Pearl River and in the settlement at the Bay of St. Louis. On January 5, 1702, the Biloxi settlement was moved to Mobile by order of the French government. It is believed that the forts at the Bay of St. Louis and the Pearl River were no longer needed and were abandoned and their personnel, like those at Biloxi, moved to a new location. No further accounts have been found about these outposts. Not only did the French leave the Hancock County area, but the Acolapissa Indians, to protect themselves from slave raids, moved in 1702 to a fortified location north of Lake Pontchartrain.

The population of the county began to grow after the Louisiana Purchase by the United

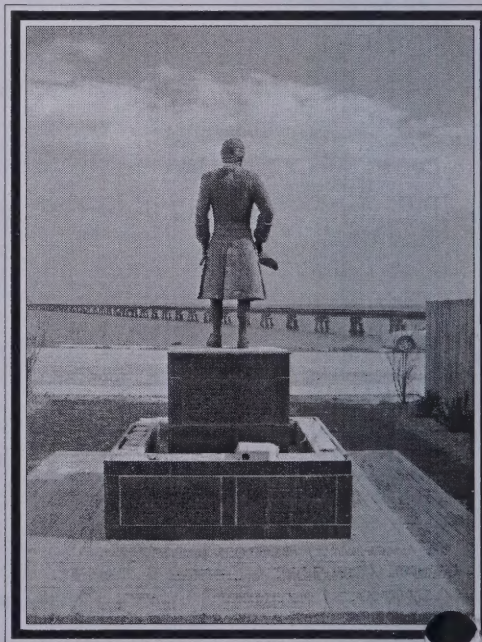
States government in 1803 settlers moving west from the eastern shore of the new nation. In the latter part of the 19th Century, growth of Bay St. Louis was stimulated by the invention of the steamboat and extension of the railroad, bringing visitors and settlers from New Orleans, seeking relief from heat and yellow fever epidemics as well as recreation and prosperity from economic opportunities in the lumber and seafood industries in fast-growing Mississippi Coast communities.

#### REFERENCES

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**Higginbotham, Jay**, translator and editor. *The Journal of Sauvole* (Mobile, AL: Colonial Books, 1969)

**Scharff, Robert G.** *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain* (Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Co., 1999)



The statue of Bienville standing watch over the Bay of Saint Louis





Putting the finishing touches on her work, 1999

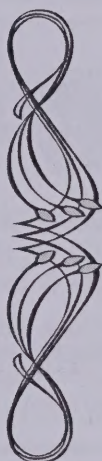
(Continued from p. 4)

way.

Therefore a special thanks to Leo Seal; Hancock Bank and its directors; Hancock Bank Superintendent Facilities Maintenance David Marshall; Mayor Edward Favre; Councilmen Carleen Murphy Moran, James Thriffley III, Connie Payne Lampley, Tad Black, and James Rutherford; Public Works Director Ronald Vanney; Bay Saint Louis Cultural Affairs Director

Mike Cuevas; Hancock County Supervisors Jeep Ladner, Rocky Pullman, Lisa Cowan, Steve Seymour, and Philip Moran; and Chancery Clerk Tim Kellar. Many thanks.

A big "Thank You" to all of you who have sent in your dues. Double check your address label for the expiration date.



center columns, [the] lanterns for the two outer columns, [and] the crest for the center of the entrance-

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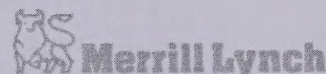
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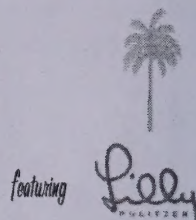
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Saturday, March 10— New Orleans Museum of Art \$35 Leave Community Center 10:00 A. M.  
Saturday, March 24—Festival of Flowers, Mobile \$35 Leave Community Center 10:00 A. M.  
Sunday, April 1— Center Stage Comedy— "Moonlight and Magnolias" \$26 Leave Community Center 12:30 P. M.  
Saturday, April 28— Bellingrath Gardens, Theodore, AL—\$38 River cruise aboard the *Southern Belle* available for \$18. Leave Community Center 9:00 A. M.

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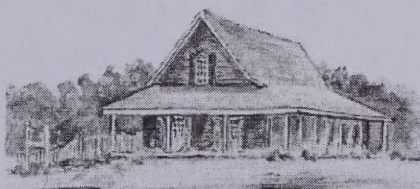
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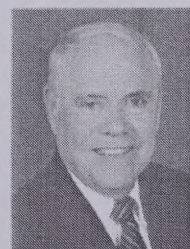
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